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CO
SUBJECT: MARCH 13 UPDATE: COLOMBIA DISPUTE WITH ECUADOR
VENEZUELA--AND NICARAGUA

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer
Reasons 1.4 (b) and d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) The GOC used a March 10-12 visit to Colombia by OAS
SYG Insulza and the OAS Commission examining the March 1 GOC
attack against the FARC in Ecuador to provide a "frank and
detailed" briefing on the attack. Presidential advisor Jorge
Eastman told us Insulza seemed impressed by the GOC's
briefings, and voiced understanding of the GOC position. FM
Araujo told the Ambassador the OAS team had not been
"political or polemical." Still, Eastman expects Ecuador to
maintain a hard line against Colombia due to the positive
response President Correa's tough stance has generated in
Ecuador. The GOC wants to obtain Interpol verification of
the information on the Reyes computers before releasing any
new information on GOV/GOE connections to the FARC. (See
Septel for the GOC's plans for the March 17 OAS ministerial.)
END SUMMARY.

OAS SYG LOOKS FORWARD IN VISIT TO COLOMBIA

12. (U) OAS SYG Jose Miguel Insulza and a special OAS Commission visited Colombia on March 10-12 to review details of the March 1 GOC attack against FARC Secretariat member Raul Reyes in Ecuador. Insulza told the media that the Commission had a productive visit to Colombia, and intends to use the March 17 ministerial meeting to propose solutions to resolve the Ecuador-Colombia dispute.

OAS IMPRESSED BY FRANK GOC BRIEFING

13. (C) Presidential Communication Director Jorge Mario Eastman accompanied Insulza and the OAS Commission to the Colombia-Ecuador border on March 11 to review details of the March 1 attack against the FARC. Eastman told us that strike mission commander General Tito Pinilla provided the OAS team a detailed briefing, including maps and a review of two "Tucano" attack aircraft. Pinilla briefed GOC intelligence reports indicating Reyes would enter Colombia; the GOC originally planned to attack him in Colombian territory. When the GOC later learned Reyes would remain in Ecuador, President Uribe decided to attack him there. Pinilla reviewed the range of the Tucano aircraft, showing how the planes fired from Colombian airspace. He also explained that Colombian military and police entered Ecuador to verify the operation's results.

14. (S) Eastman said the OAS group--previously briefed by the Ecuadorians--probed hard on whether there was USG involvement in the attack. Some of the OAS members appeared influenced by some Ecuadorians' claims that USG aircraft operating out of the U.S. Cooperative Security Location (CSL) in Manta carried out the operation. Eastman noted that after the OAS group raised Ecuadorian claims that the GOC used precision-guided bombs in the attack, the GOC conceded that it had used GPS-guided bombs and A-37s in addition to the Tucanos.

15. (C) Foreign Minister Fernando Araujo confirmed to the Ambassador that the OAS mission was neither political nor polemical. (Note: See Septel for details on the GOC approach to the March 17 OAS ministerial.) Eastman said the OAS group left Colombia impressed by the frank and open way in which the GOC briefed them on the Reyes operation, and Insulza left the impression that he personally understood and sympathized with the GOC position. The GOC is confident Insulza will look for a balanced formula.

IMPRESSIONS OF COMMISSION POSITIONS

16. (C) Eastman said the Brazilian ambassador voiced understanding for Colombia's stance, but stressed that respect for sovereignty and national borders are essential. Peru's ambassador was not a strong voice, but the GOC expects

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Peru to back the GOC. The Bahamas ambassador was impressed by the physical distances and difficult terrain on the border, but made only cautious comments. He speculated that the Argentine ambassador would be the most critical of Colombia's position.

ECUADOR MAINTAINS HARD-LINE

17. (C) Eastman conceded that Uribe's initial description of events to President Rafael Correa was misleading, since Uribe suggested that the operation started in Colombia and spilled over into Ecuador. Still, the GOC thinks Correa subsequently

hardened his stance due to pressure from Venezuelan President Chavez. The GOC fears Correa will continue his hard-line stance, since Ecuadorian public opinion and media appears to support his tough line. In contrast, Eastman said the GOC paid for a poll in Venezuela in mid-January that showed Venezuelans do not support Chavez' aggressive posture against Colombia; this finding has not changed as a result of the latest crisis.

GOC STRATEGY ON RELEASE OF REYES COMPUTER INFO

18. (C) After the Rio Group meeting, Eastman said the GOC decided not to publicly release further information from the Reyes computers showing Ecuadorian and Venezuelan links to the FARC. The GOC wants to get Interpol verification of the computers before releasing any new information to the public.

Brownfield

=====CABLE ENDS=====